

Farmers in Victoria's Lindenow Valley worried about mineral sand mine proposed by Kalbar Resources

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Vic Country Hour by Tim Lamacraft

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Lionel Rose and Carolyn Cameron say a proposed mineral sands mine near Glenaladale is unwelcome (Tim Lamacraft)

A proposed mineral sands mine near Gippsland in Victoria's Lindenow Valley has some local farmers questioning the notion of co-existence with extractive industries.

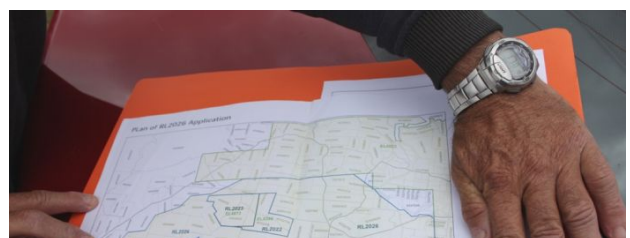
Formerly owned by Rio Tinto, the deposit is said to contain large amounts of zircon and titanium and has been in the hands of Kalbar Resources since April this year.

Managing Director of Kalbar Resources, Rob Bishop, says a mining licence is years off and until then the company is happy to consult with the community.

"We're not trying to hide anything, we'll be there when the community wants to talk to us," he said.

Livestock producers and vegetable growers in the

Gippsland farmers Lionel Rose and Bill Bullmer question co-existence between mining and agriculture. Mine proponent Rob Bishop says it's possible. (ABC News)



region remain deeply sceptical about the project, saying co-existence with mining is not possible.

Bill Bulmer jointly manages Bulmer's Farm Fresh Vegetables, a 1,500 acre property on the fertile flats of the Lindenow Valley that grows leafy greens and broccoli.

A major supplier of fresh produce to the fast-food and grocery industry, he's concerned by the likely impacts a nearby mine would have on the clean green image of his business.

"The size and the scale of the mining they're talking about could have huge impacts of dust," he said.

"They're talking about having the size of a kilometre by a kilometre [open cut mine].

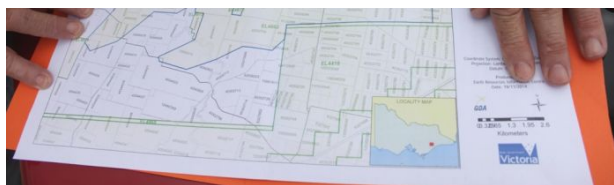
"I don't know whether that's true or not, but if it is there is no way to stop those westerlies blowing down in the Valley and into our product.

"There is a thing in mineral sands called monazite which is slightly radioactive.

"How minute (the quantities) are we're not sure, they tell us it's very low levels and wouldn't have an impact."

He says perception is critical to buyers of his produce.

"I'm sure if I wanted a marketing edge on someone else's product and said, listen, will you take my nice clean green product or will you take the product from the Lindenow Valley that might be covered in a radioactive dust...."



Lionel Rose shows the boundaries of current exploration and retention licences in East Gippsland (Tim Lamacraft)



Around ten kilometres from the Lindenow Valley, a proposed mineral sands mine is worrying farmers (Tim Lamacraft)



Lindenow Valley vegetable grower Bill Bullmer says a nearby mineral sands mine is unwelcome (Tim Lamacraft)

Bob Bishop says there are numerous examples around Australia where mineral sands mining occurs

Rob Bishop says there are numerous examples around Australia where mineral sands mining occurs alongside agriculture in terrain similar to that of the Lindenow Valley.

"For many decades, it's been started, mined and finished and rehabilitated to farming land," he said.

"We are confident that we can prove up a project that can co-exist in a beneficial way with existing businesses."

According to the company's website, 'the project covers 368.70 square kilometres and includes a very large scale heavy mineral (HM) JORC resource with substantial low strip-ratio, high-grade areas'.

Kalbar is looking at two main deposits in the region, one at Mossiface north-east of Bairnsdale, and the much larger deposit at Glenaladale, next to the Lindenow Valley.

The main focus is on the Glenaladale site, which the company says has the potential to produce 25 ktpa of zircon for 10 years.

Kalbar's website states: "The current resource is big enough to sustain a mine of this size for decades, creating 50 to 60 full time jobs with flow-on effects to the local economy.

'So, once established, mineral sands mining will be a long-term industry for the Gippsland region".

Fernbank farmer Lionel Rose has been in the area for nearly 40 years and runs sheep on 350 acres of dry-country within kilometres of the proposed mine site.

He's vehemently opposed to the project, as is fellow Fernbank resident Carolyn Cameron.

They're worried the project is negatively affecting property values, could present health problems and are sceptical about Kalbar's promise of being able to return mined land to productive farm land.

"We know what the soil is like, we've heard these promises before, we know what happens in a lot of rehabilitation cases," Mr Rose said.

"We're realistic, people have farmed here for three generations, we know this country.

"There's no guarantee that in a 60 metre deep mine site, a kilometre square, that they can put this soil back in the same horizons, in the same depth and density that won't upset the geology.

"They can't guarantee that."



Fernbank sheep farmer Lionel Rose says a mineral sands mine is unwelcome (Tim Lamacraft)